

To the Members of the California State Senate:

I am returning Senate Bill 1223 without my signature as it may contribute to rising premiums and make health care less affordable and accessible for uninsured Californians. This bill is substantially similar to Senate Bill 1158 (Scott) which I vetoed in 2004. I am concerned that increasing the cost of health coverage by mandating benefits, if even by a small amount, may leave more children without any health insurance.

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, Health insurance premiums have steadily risen by double digits every year since 2001 and employers cite high premiums as the most common reason for not offering health coverage. I am concerned that without fundamental changes in the system, insurance coverage will become even less affordable for workers and employers. This is why I want to see a new health care paradigm that addresses affordability, shared responsibility and the promotion of healthy living. Consistent with this approach, I have signed AB 2651 (Jones) to ensure early detection of hearing loss through newborn hearing screenings. Early detection is critical to ensuring children with hearing loss receive effective treatment and intervention to support them in developing strong communication skills, and succeeding in school.

I look forward to building on our efforts to date and working with my partners in the Legislature, to develop a comprehensive and systemic approach to health care that supports cost containment, recognizes the shared responsibility of individuals, employers and government, and not only provides medical treatment to people when they are sick, but strives to make sure people don't get sick in the first place.

Sincerely,

Arnold Schwarzenegger